



# Al-Risala 1991

May-June

## Two-Sided Difficulty

A Symposium organized on August 15, 1990, in New Delhi under the auspices of the Deen Dayal Institute was attended by well-known Hindu intellectuals. One of the speakers at this symposium was Giri Lal Jain, former editor of the *Times of India*. The following is an excerpt from his speech:

“Contrary to the popular perception, the central issue before the country, as I see it, is not, and has not been, the Hindu-Muslim problem. The central issue has been, and is going to remain for the foreseeable future, the Hindu-Hindu problem. The Hindu society, it is a commonplace, is deeply fragmented along caste lines, and since independence, every ‘care’ has been taken by many of those in charge of the country’s affairs to see to it that those conflicts get aggravated. Finally, under the ‘great’ leadership of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, we face conditions of near civil war.

“I view the future of India – I am sorry to say on Independence Day – with deep misgivings. Independence itself, you will recall, was born in bloodshed. Independence has since then been bathed in blood again and again. I have the terrible feeling that what we have seen in the past will pale into insignificance in comparison with what awaits us in the future. I do not believe that anything like sensible political order is likely to emerge in this country in the near future, or indeed, foreseeable future. The Muslim problem is only one expression of this failure of the Hindus to create and sustain a political order which conforms to their genius and needs.”

The point made by Mr. Jain deserves serious consideration. It is a fact that Hindu society is based on the caste system; the caste system is, indeed, the sine qua non of Hinduism. It would only be by negating Hinduism itself that this caste structure could be abandoned. But if one believes in Hinduism, one cannot deny such a major underlying principle, set forth as it is in the holy books of Hinduism. In the Rigveda, for instance, society has been divided into four classes according to high or low birth. The Rigveda hymn, 10:90, declares that the Brahmin (priest), the Rajaya, or Kshatriya (warrior-ruler) the Vaisya (commoner) and the Sudra (seft) issued forth at the moment of creation from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the primeval being. The sudras live in servitude to the other three. The Vaisyas, in turn – the common people, the grazers and cultivators – are in contrast with the governing classes, i.e. the secular Kshatriyas, or warrior-rulers, and the sacerdotal Brahmins. The Brahmins and Kashatriyas are in contrast to each other, the former undertaking priestly duties, while the latter have the actual dominion.

The system of the four classes is fundamental to the views the traditional law-givers held of society. They specified a different set of obligations for each: the task of Brahmin is to study and advise, the warrior-ruler to protect, the Vaisya to cultivate and the serf to serve (*Encyclopaedia Britannica-X/361*).

How deeply ingrained this concept is in Hindu society can be gauged by the violence of the demonstrations against the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations to reserve 27 per cent of the government posts for the lower castes. The anti-Mandal campaign was launched on a massive scale and reached such a pitch of intensity that about 100 Hindu youths attempted self-immolation as a form of protest. The upper caste Hindus could not bear the idea of the backward castes becoming their equals in government posts. Indeed, they launched their campaign with such gusto that the V.P. Singh government was shaken and Mr. Singh finally had to resign on November 7, 1990. Since it was at his instance that the decision was taken to implement the Mandal Commission report.

The caste system is a permanent obstacle to the unity of the Hindu community. So long as this system is extant, its disparate elements will be unable to unite. And where there is no unity, there is no power.

Then what means could there be of uniting the Hindu community? Mr. Jain who, we must remember, is a top-rated Hindu journalist maintains that there is no positive ground on which unity may be achieved in the Hindu community. It is only on a negative basis that it will unite. And what more negative a basis can there be in present times than anti-Muslim feeling? Arouse anti-Muslim feeling, and you will unite the Hindus. But it should be borne in mind that unity arising from such negativism can never yield positive benefits. Unity achieved in this way could only have destructive results. It could never be constructive in its achievements.

Mr. Jain has dealt with this difficulty of Hindu society in an article in the *Times of India* (July 4, 1987) in which he maintains that the problem has two sides to it, because "what is possible is not desirable, and what is desirable is not possible."

This shows to what extent Hindu society is in a state of helplessness, having no firm ground on which to stand. It requires, perforce, and external prop. In the absence of such a support, the walls of Hinduism will collapse on their own without anyone having to demolish them.

By blowing the Babari Masjid issue out of all proportion and by the very act of launching a movement in the name, of the Babari Masjid, our misguided Muslim leaders have provided that very support to the Hindus of which they were in such sore need. This war of words by over-zealous Muslim leaders has naturally been exploited to the full by extremist Hindu leaders, thereby stirring up anti-Muslim feelings in their community on an unprecedented scale. What is called the 'Hindu Wave' or Hindu unity stems entirely from this blind, anti-Muslim feeling. The saddest part of it is that the stimulus for this 'unity' has arisen out of the shallowness of the activities of our own foolish leaders between 1986 and 1990.

### Not even martyrdom cancels out an unpaid debt.

The Prophet, admonishing his followers, told them that the struggle for God's cause, and faith in Him were the greatest of all actions. A man arose and asked, "If I am slain while I am about God's business, will all my sins be forgiven?" The Prophet replied, "If, in the patient pursuance of your purpose, pressing ever onwards, but at the same time seeking God's pleasure, you are slain in His path, your sins will indeed be forgiven." After a pause the man, at the Prophet's request, repeated his question. "Does this mean that if I am slain while I am about God's business, all my sins will be forgiven?" The Prophet gave the same answer to this but added: "But not if you are in debt. That is what I have been told by Gabriel."

(Muslim)

## No Third Option

There is an elderly Muslim acquaintance of mine who never misses reading *Al-Risala*, in spite of his feeling that its message places too much emphasis on self-restraint. When we met last October on the 18th, he said, "What do you think of the prevailing situation? Hasn't it made *jihad* inevitable?" Before answering his question, I asked him if what he proposed to do would be within the bounds of the Qur'an and Hadith, or would go beyond their guidelines. "Within their bounds," he replied. "But don't the Qur'an and Hadith subscribe to *jihad*?" he asked. My answer was "Yes, they do. But according to the Qur'an, you either wage a war, or you exercise self-restraint. There is no third option."

"What is this 'third option' that you refer to?" he asked. I then explained to him that the third option is only talking about jihad, without either performing it, or exercising self-restraint. This option as such has no Islamic sanction. In fact, in terms of what is prescribed by the Qur'an and Hadith, it is actually a sin. The Qur'an says: "O believer why do you say what you never do? It is most odious in God's sight that you should say that which you do not do. God loves those who fight for His cause in ranks as if they were a solid cemented edifice."

These verses were delivered at Madinah on the subject of Muslims who only talked of doing battle without actually engaging in any fighting. These verses were a declaration of God's displeasure at such people. I then expressed the view that Muslims should exercise self-restraint in the prevailing situation. This is my firm conviction and, in practice, I abide by it. But generally speaking Muslims believe, on the contrary, that under such circumstances, Muslims are enjoined to take up arms. The question I put to them is, why don't they go ahead and do what they so strongly believe in?

They should appreciate that it is not just undesirable to keep on talking of fighting, but is actually a grave offence – a sin, in fact which will only incur the wrath of the Almighty. This is a dangerous trend, but a sizeable number of Muslims today appear to have fallen a prey to it.

## Judging Others

When Dr. Zakir Hussain (1896-1969) took over as the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, a group of people called on him, as he narrated later, and complained that a large number of the teaching staff were conservative and communal. "They are damaging the reputation of the university and vitiating its atmosphere. They have to be removed to restore the healthy atmosphere", they said. Dr. Zakir Hussain asked them to submit a list of such persons to him.

Shortly afterwards another group came to meet Dr. Zakir Hussain. They too had complaints to make. According to them, a large number of teachers were either atheists or Communists. Their presence was not doing any good to the reputation of the university. "They should be removed to create a proper atmosphere in the university", was their plea. They too were asked to prepare a list of such persons.

The two lists were submitted to him. At that point of time the University had just about 300 teachers, but the two lists contained 200 names each. Dr. Zakir Hussain remarked, "I am at a total loss. How do I dismiss 400 teachers, when I have only 300?"

On closer scrutiny, it was revealed that at least 50 names were common to both the lists. Dr. Zakir Hussain then asked, "Tell me, if I dismiss all of them, who will be left to teach the students?"

This incident is a telling commentary on the state of affairs in the community. Today, a Muslim feels free to sit in judgement over others. But he himself is the least willing to introspect. Each one is armed with a long list of wrong-doers. But no one has a list of his own failings.

When the individuals in a community develop a spirit of self-criticism, the community progresses but if people indulge in criticising others, it only degrades the community.

By being critical of oneself, one achieve success not only in this world but, also in the world of the Hereafter. If, however, one starts finding fault with others, it has ruinous consequences in both the worlds.

## Popular Belief Versus the Truth

The result of the UPSC examination came as a pleasant surprise. I aspired to be a pilot in the Indian Air Force, and now I had crossed the first hurdle. There were still two to go, an interview and a medical test. On arrival at the headquarters of the Services Selection Board at Dehradun I found that over 50 candidates from all over the country had been called in that batch. Finally, only five would make it.

I spent the first day settling in and getting acquainted with the others. Extending my hand to a total stranger, I said, 'I am Yusuf Khan.' The young man, whose name, as I later learnt, was Kripalani, knitted his brows as he took my hand, and blurted out, "Do they take Muslims in the IAF?" His question came as a nasty shock. But then, concealing my discomfiture, I answered his question with another. "If they don't, why have they called me?" Meanwhile, the others had all taken umbrage at Kripalani's remark and proceeded to give him a good dressing down. Then he was full of apologies.

Actually, Kripalani was only expressing a commonly held belief which was subscribed to even by my college friends. At one stage, even I had similar doubts. In fact, my Muslim friends were so convinced of the futility of trying for a defence job that they tried to discourage me from even applying. That was in 1961.

Kripalani's off-the-cuff remark nagged me for all of the five days that the interview lasted, and even subsequently, while I awaited the final result, which came six months later. Kripalani had made it, and so had I. The next time we met again was at Allahabad, where we started our training together, fortunately, this time, without any rancour.

The rejection rate in the pilot's training course is very high. Not only is a cadet expected to fly 'solo' within record time, but he must also show suitable progress in numerous other tests which are conducted very frequently. It transpired that Kripalani had problems in coping with his flight training, and finally he had to be suspended. Later, he became a navigator in the IAF. But God was kind to me; and I completed my training successfully. My dreams all came true when I became a fighter pilot. But I wonder where I should have been if I had not chosen to ignore the popular belief that there is a bias against Muslims.

This then is the reason for my narrating this experience (although some would say that personal example is a bad example!) to drive home the point that we must not allow misinformation and false assumptions to weigh us down. That is exactly what Muslims are doing, and the result is that they are descending into the same kind of gloom which prevailed in the fifties and sixties. I find in all their thoughts and actions an undercurrent of despair.

It should be borne in mind that mine was not an isolated case. There are numerous other such instances. But, somehow, our newspapers give prominence to the rejection rather than the selection. This trend has created the impression among the younger generation of Muslims that such a bias exists, that it is all pervasive and that, no matter how hard they try, it will always bar their way to selection.

Every society has its prejudices which, to a certain extent, is inevitable, but this should not become a phobia with us. If prejudice exists, we must simply overcome it by hard work. We should recognise, too, that even prejudice has its limits. Stretched beyond a point, it loses its force. What really matters in this world is one's own ability. All else is secondary.

A man of lesser ability will always put the blame on prejudice. But a more able person will not treat this as an insuperable problem. He will win out against all odds – even against the most rooted of prejudices.

–Wg. Cdr. M. Yusuf Khan.



### Trusting in God, not wealth

During the Caliphate of Umar, some revenue arrived from Iraq. Umar began to distribute it, and appeared to be on the point of exhausting it completely when Abd ar Rahman ibn Auf suggested to Umar that he should keep some of it back in order to deal with any enemy attack or calamity that might befall them. At this, Umar was indignant. "Be done with you; you play the devil's advocate. No, by God, for the sake of tomorrow, I will not disobey God today."

## National Hero

A B.Sc. student burst into the office of the Dean of the Department of Theology at the Aligarh Muslim University. "This is a Muslim University!" he said with great vehemence. "You are in charge of the religious affairs here. I must bring it to your notice that there is a book in English, here, in the Azad library which contains a picture of our Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, you must have this book removed immediately from the library, other wise..."

The Dean of Theology replied, you know how big the Azad library is. Books keep coming to it from different parts of the world. In such circumstances, we would very likely also receive books which make fun of God. Will you go on being provoked every time you come upon a book of this nature?" "Sir" the student replied, "God belongs to everybody, but the Holy Prophet belongs to us." (*Ehtisab*, Aligarh, May 15, 1984)

Why did the student think of Allah as belonging to all while he thought of the Prophet as being his very own? The reason was that he regarded the Prophet as the national hero of his own community. Every community has a hero of its own who is a source of pride, just as every community regards its own hero as being superior to the heroes of other communities. God can be common, to all, but no such sharing is possible as regards a national hero. It was due to this communal psychology that the Muslim student lost his temper at the disrespect shown to the Prophet, whereas he was not going to mind if God was made fun of.

This incident aptly portrays the attitude of present-day Muslims, who never celebrate God's Day, but who mark the Prophet's Day with great pomp and ceremony all over the world. The reason is simply that according to their national psychology, they do not feel any affinity with God, because they do not take any personal pride in Him. On the other hand, since the Prophet Muhammad has become their hero on the plane of history and, in that sense, is a source of national pride, they hold celebration in his honour' in order to give expression to their natural feelings of pride.

Atheism is the order of the day. But Muslims feel no enthusiasm about working towards the intellectual domination of monotheism over atheism. Instead, they allow themselves to be provoked at finding a picture of the Prophet. This, surely, is hero worship. It is certainly not God-worship.

## Death – A Ruthless Teacher

Robert Holmes Court was an Australian tycoon whose first venture was a woollen mill which he set up in western Australia in 1962. From there he soon went on to carve out a financial empire for himself. His assets were estimated to be of the order of \$1.1 billion. Then in 1987, his business started going downhill and he lost half his empire. In September, 1990, he suffered a heart attack and died at his horse-breeding farm at Perth when he was only 53 years old. "Once the country's wealthiest man, he died the second richest (after fellow entrepreneur Kerry Packet) with an estimated fortune of \$650 million." (*Time Magazine*, September 17, 1990)

In this world, everyone remains in the first place – before death. Then death relegates everyone to a "second" position. Before death, man regards his life as the only 'real' existence. Nothing else matters to him. But death brings the message that the only reality is that of God; no other 'I' has any real existence.

Death is the most ruthless of teachers. Wise is he who learns this for himself *before* this 'ruthless teacher' catches up with him. A man endowed with such insight will be looked upon kindly by his Maker. One who waits to learn his lesson from the 'ruthless teacher' is little better than a blind man. When his end comes, he will be left forever groping in the dark. It will be too late for him then to find the right path.

How disillusioned will such a man be when he finds himself relegated from the position of 'Mr. First' to the rank of 'Mr. Second', when the moment of truth ultimately arrives.

## The Way of the Prophet of Mercy

After the conquest of Mecca, a number of Meccan women came to the Prophet to accept Islam. Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind bint Utba ibn Rabiya was one of them. It was this woman who had desecrated the body of Hamza, the Prophet's uncle. She had come with other women, because she feared that if she talked before the Prophet, he would recognize her and kill her.

At the time of Bayah (oath of allegiance) she therefore hid her face with a veil. Since she belonged to a noble family, her sense of superiority did not allow her to keep quiet. While she was repeating the words of *bayah* as uttered by the Prophet, when he came to these words, 'Say that you will not kill your offspring', Hind could not contain herself and said in contempt: "You have killed them all on the day of Badr, so it is you who should know it." Alternatively this incident is recorded in these words: "You kill their fathers and advise us regarding their children."

Even before this, Hind had insulted the Prophet several times, but on this occasion, she insulted him to his face. Had the Prophet's way been the same as that of the present so-called Muslim leaders, the Prophet would have promptly ordered the execution of Hind. But, on the contrary, he accepted her *bayah*, and bade her enter the fold of Islam.

The greatest thing that Muslims have lost today is this Sunnah of the Prophet of Mercy.

### Prosperity the greatest trial

Saad ibn abi Waqqas records the Prophet as saying: "More than the affliction of hardship, it is the affliction of prosperity that I fear on your account. When you were afflicted by hardship, you showed great forbearance; but as for the world, it is overly sweet and luscious."

According to Auf ibn Malik, the Prophet also said: "You will be showered with worldly riches, so much so that if you stray, it will be precisely because of them."

(Al-Tabarani)

## A Chapter of History

When the Prophet Joseph called his family to Egypt, their number was put at 67, according to the Bible. (This number does not include the girls married into Jacob's family.) About 500 years after the death of Joseph, the Prophet Moses appeared on the scene. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, their numbers ran into several lakhs. We know from the Bible that in the second year of their migration, Moses conducted a census in the Sinai Desert. The number of able-bodied men listed in this census totaled 603,550. This means that counting all the men and women, young and old, they must, taken all together, have numbered at least two million.

It is obvious that a family of 67 people could not increase at this very high rate just by the natural process of birth from one generation to the next. This extraordinary increase in their numbers was certainly due to the missionary work carried out by the Israelites. Those Egyptians who converted evidently came under the influence of their culture as well, for when the Israelites left Egypt, these brothers in religion went along with them. The Bible describes these neo-converts as 'mixed multitude'. (Exodus 12:38)

It is common knowledge that the Israelites in Egypt were in a state of total subjugation, being employed by the Egyptians as daily wagers and slaves. While the Copts enjoyed an honourable position in society, the Israelites were looked down upon; they were not even worth mentioning. Even so, a number of Copts came under the influence of the Israelites' religion, forsaking their own religion in order to enter the fold of Moses.

This shows that the true religion is possessed of the greatest of all powers. It can thus conquer people's hearts, even when there does not seem to be the remotest possibility of its being able to do so.

The longing for the religion of God is present in human nature itself; and this is religion's real power. The religion of God enters people's hearts by virtue of its own strength, and not because of the national, communal or material strength of the believers' group.

## An Eye-Opener

The Rath Yatra of Mr. Lal Krishn Advani, President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, originated from Somnath on October 1, 90. It had to travel 10 thousand kilometers to reach its destination – Ayodhya. Mr. Advani and his adherents reached, Delhi on their way to Ayodhya on October 16. Here they held a mammoth meeting at which they declared that their “Ram Rath” would certainly reach Ayodhya and that they would not rest until they had built the Ram Mandir at the Ram Janam Bhumi. “No power can stop us.” One of the points made by Mr. Advani, which we would do well to remember, was that “the BJP had thrown its weight behind the Vishwa Hindu Parishad only when the Babari Masjid Action Committee had been formed in 1986 and made it a public issue.”

This makes it quite clear that forming Action Committees at the all-India level in the name of the Babari Masjid and making a public issue of it has only placed an obstacle in the path of finding a solution to the actual problem. This is because these committees, by their very existence, have produced counter movements among the Hindus, they in turn having risen to support the cause of the Ram Janam Bhumi in far greater numbers and in far superior strength. It must be conceded that the Muslim movements have given nothing to the Muslims. On the contrary, they have provided the necessary basis for unity among the Hindu community.

As ‘we all know, it takes two hands to clap. Similarly, it takes two people, or two sides to keep up hatred. Remove one hand, from the other and you cannot clap. Let one side stop hating the other and hatred of itself will fade away. The present Hindu unity is based on mutual hatred which is kept up because neither side will remove the ‘hand’ to stop the ‘clapping’.

In the present circumstances, the best strategy for the Muslims would be to remove their ‘hand’ unilaterally, Then the ‘clapping’ would cease altogether. The atmosphere subsequently created would then be entirely favourable to Muslims and Islam.

## Science Updated

Robert Boyle (1627-1691), devoted himself entirely to the study of science, and, in time, became a scientist of repute in London. But his studies did not distance him from religion. They had the effect rather of bringing him closer to it, and, in his later years, he became a staunch and zealous protestant Christian. He did not marry and could, therefore, devote his entire life and earnings to the propagation of the Christian faith.

“Robert Boyle believed in the existence of God. In his view of divine providence, nature was clocklike mechanism that had been made and set in motion by the Creator at the beginning and now functioned according to secondary laws, which could be studied by science.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3/97)

It was held by scientists that there was uniformity in the universe. All parts of the universe, it was believed, followed the same laws. And such notions persisted till the nineteenth century, they began to be subjected to a rigorous reappraisal.

Where the study of the macrocosmic universe had appeared to show that there was uniformity in the functioning of the universe, studies at the microcosmic level refuted this supposition. The uniformity, which appeared at the level solar system, disappeared at the level of atoms

The truth is that the universe was made by God at His own behest, and it is He who makes it continue to function. No mortal has had a hand in either the making or the running of the universe. Any theory formulated to explain the universe, after abandoning the concept of God, has finally been proved wrong. This fact is sufficient to show that the concept of one God is the only correct explanation. Any other explanation besides this is a mere intellectual supposition, which does not exist beyond the mind of man.

Allah the Almighty has said: whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and my servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would grant him it.



## Reward for Fasting

Fasting during the month of Ramadhan is a special form of prayer in Islam. There are several *hadiths* that tell us the special rewards that it has for us. In one, Abu Hurayra quotes the Prophet as saying that the reward for a good deed may be increased from 10 to 700 times, but that God says that fasting is different from other good deeds. Fasting is for Him and He shall give the reward for it. The faithful abstain from food and other desires for His sake. For the observer of the fast there are two joyous occasions. One when he breaks his fast and the other when he meets with his Creator.

The extraordinary benefits of fasting accrue from the fact that the hardship of fasting creates unusual spiritual experiences within, which manifest themselves in the prayers of a man.

During the fast, the pangs of hunger and thirst make a man feel vulnerable and he turns towards God with renewed zeal. He cries out, "God, I have obeyed your one command, there are many I could not. I kept one day's fast, but I failed on several other occasions. I seek your special blessings."

When sincere prayer like this is uttered, God turns His special attention to it, and the rewards are boundless.

Man prays in this world and the reward is given in the world hereafter. But fasting is one exception for which a taste of the reward is given in this world itself. *Iftar* (breaking the fast) gives a glimpse of the boundless rewards that await man in the world hereafter.

## Deviation in Religion

The age of antiquity was also the age of mythology. One of its natural corollaries was the belief in incarnation which became prevalent in polytheistic nations. For instance, the Greek and Romans believed the sun to be a god, and worshipped it by calling it god's son.

In their days of decline, the Jews and the Christians included this concept in their set of beliefs. However, categorizing Uzair (Ezra) and Christ as mere messengers of God seemed to accord them a status inferior to that of the divine progeny of the Greek and Roman gods. For this reason, they came to call their Prophet 'Son of God'.

"The Jews call Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (In this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth." (Qur'an 9:3)

Such deviation through imitation, although in a different form, has come to be practised by present-day Muslims. That is, they have felt it necessary to explain Islam in terms of a system. By its nature, it is the same kind of deviation into which the communities of old had strayed under the influence of unbelieving nations.

In modern times, such social and political concepts as Socialism and democracy appeared. Under their influence modern man began to think in terms of system. He began to envisage the salvation of man in the revolutionary changes in the social set-up. Muslims thus came to think that their traditional concept of Islam was inferior to modern secular systems. In order to bring Islam into line with the times, they began to project Islam as a political system, and to say that it was the standard-bearer of social revolution, and so on.

What is called revolutionary thinking in modern times is system-based thinking, while the obverse may be termed individual based thinking. But the target of Islamic *da'wah* is not system. Its target is the individual. From the Islamic standpoint, launching a movement, the target of which is a system, is like putting the cart before the horse. Because a system by itself does not amount to anything. In this world, it is individuals who form a system. The system does not form individuals.

In modern times, the so-called Islamic movements, which are run on the pattern of systems, have done tremendous harm to the cause of Islam, its worst aspect being that all those verses of the Qur'an which provide spiritual food and aim at raising awareness, in the sense of producing an inner revolution of heart and mind, were all, by means of willful misinterpretation, linked with the notions of system and external revolution. Politics, no doubt, is a part of Islam. But those verses which have, with impunity, been associated with politics, are unconnected in any way with it. For instance, the Qur'an enjoined the

faithful to 'magnify' their Lord (74:3). This means to acknowledge the greatness of God from the depths of one's heart and mind. But those who were interested in system-based thinking gave a political turn to it by saying that 'magnify your Lord' meant establish the political greatness of God in this world, and hoist the flag of divine power over parliament. This is only one example. There were actually many other verses which were given a political interpretation by deliberately distorting their meaning.

All such commentaries of the Quranic verses fall into the category of imitation (9:30). Moreover, such interpretations have made Islam – a religion of humility – into a religion of arrogance. The politicisers of Islam have developed a negative, destructive mentality among the community. The religion which was sent to cause man to fear God has, as a result of these movements, had the contrary effect of making people unfearing of God.

**Building more for the hereafter than for this world.**

A Muslim of Medina had just built himself a house, and was spreading mud on the roof when the Prophet passed by. "What are you doing?" the Prophet asked him. "Applying some mud," came the reply, to which the Prophet said: "The Hour is nigh; closer than that which you apply."

## Double Standards

Compared to Kuwait, with its area of 6880 square miles, Iraq, with its area of 168878 square miles is a very large country. Having spent most of its oil revenue to build up a massive military potential, and taking advantage of the fact that Kuwait had virtually no army, President Saddam Hussain of Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait on the 2nd of August, 1990. After annexing it by force, he called it the 19th province of Iraq.

The UN's response was prompt. The Iraqi invasion was condemned by most countries of the world, the USA going to the extent of sending a huge task force to impose sanctions against Iraq. This stopped the outflow of oil, from which 95 per cent of the latter's revenue comes, and sealed off the import of arms, food and other essential supplies. Iraq has no industry or agriculture worth the name. What followed was rhetoric and invective from the ruler of Iraq, President Saddam Hussain, against the U.S. Rejecting the proposal to negotiate with the U.S.A., he tersely asked, "Is Kuwait the 52nd State of the U.S.A."

This kind of question was aimed at side-tracking the issue. It is obvious that Kuwait is neither the 52nd State of America, nor the 19th province of Iraq. Saddam Hussain was blaming America for what he himself was guilty of.

Such double standards are most prevalent today. But people should realize that only such utterances are acceptable as have true value in the eyes of God. In any case in the life to come, words will lose all meaning. The true believer is one who sets as little value upon mere words today as they will have in God's divine Court. Faithful is he who accepts most willingly today what he will be forced to accept in the Hereafter. For, by that time, it will be too late.

**One does not lose by giving.**

Abu Hurayrah reports this saying of the Prophet: "Charity does not decrease anyone's wealth while forgiveness only increases a man's honour; God raises up one who abases himself before his Lord."

(Muslim, *Sahih*)

## Criticism and Difference of Opinion

Ibn Qayyim was born in Damascus in 691 AH and died in 751 AH. He writes in one of his well-known books; *Elam al Muwaqqieen* that there were differences of opinion in one hundred religious matters between Umar Faruq and Abdullah ibn Masood. Mentioning many such differences between the companions of the Prophet, he writes: "And no one ever objected to such differences. All of them regarded this as something natural. Such differences neither strained their relationships nor caused any friction in the-Muslim *Ummah*."

This was the state of Islam which prevailed in the times of the Prophet's companions – a time known as the exemplary period of Islamic history. In those days every Muslim felt free to differ from others and this difference of opinion was often expressed in harsh words. Even so, it never happened that anyone was urged to withhold his criticism. Nor, for that matter, was such criticism treated as something displeasing.

On the other hand, when we look at the Muslims of today, we find a completely different state of affairs. If, today, a Muslim figure is criticised, all his followers are instantly up in arms. They are not ready to bear with the critic. What is the reason for the state of affairs to have been so different during these two periods?

The reason is that the companions of the Prophet had attributed all greatness to the one and only God. Besides Him, all human beings were treated on an equal footing. As such, criticising one of them did not make any difference. On the other hand, the Muslims of the present day have associated greatness with human beings alongside God. These human beings are called '*akabirs*', that is, the greats. That is the reason for our contemporaries becoming provoked by criticism directed at their favorite personalities.

The companions of the Prophet are the standard. If Muslims uphold someone else as the standard, it is undoubtedly an innovation (*bid'ah*) in religion, and innovation is not acceptable in Islam.

## Going Beyond the Visible-

People generally talk about 'community' problems or, at best, are to be found discussing the superficial aspects of religion; no one seems interested in its meaningful aspects. This is probably because it is only visible objects which attract man's attention. In the past as well as the present, it has been extremely difficult for him to direct his attention towards the invisible.

Man makes those things his deities which are visible. He fails to understand how things which cannot be seen with the naked eye can be the focus of human attention. He becomes easily involved with whatever can be seen and comprehended externally, but he does not know how to concern himself with those things which he cannot see. He well understands the importance of whatever presents itself before him in a perceptible form, but he ignores anything which he cannot perceive.

This worship of natural phenomena, which finds its final, extreme expression in the form of polytheism, is a man's greatest weakness. A consequence of this weakness is apparent in man's inability to progress in his faith.

A polytheist is one who, apart from his refusal to believe in the one, unseen God, associates godhead with certain seeable objects. An atheist, on the other hand, is one who directly rejects the existence of God on the grounds that he cannot see Him. These are extreme types of religious backsliding.

But there is another aspect of the matter which it is equally important to discuss from the point of view of its consequences, that is, the ineffectiveness of faith despite its acceptance. This happens when man expresses his faith in God, but fails to see Him. He believes in God, but fails to realize the profundity of godhead. He is a devotee of God, but fails to rise above his tangible world in order to make God the centre of his attention.

Not to apprehend the unseen God amounts to failure to find the hidden significance of His existence. There are many people in this world who are prepared to revere the possessors of material wealth, while ignoring the Almighty who is rich in spiritual treasures. Those who ignore God in this way are finally the losers in terms of spiritual meaningfulness.



## A Hadith

Many predictions have been made in the books of hadith about the final age, i.e. the immediately preceding Doomsday. One of these has been recorded by Imam Ahmad and other traditionists. "Miqdad narrated that he heard the Prophet saying that no house or hutment would be left where Islam's *Kalimah* had not entered. Either God would honour them by bringing them into the fold of Islam on their own, or God would force them."

This *hadith* shows that in the last period, Islam will enter into every home. However, what it actually means is that it will be the *Kalimah* (religion) of Islam which will enter, and not the political power of Islam. Certain people have interpreted this *hadith* to mean that it will be the political rule of Islam which will bring everyone within its fold. As a result, they are engaged in a political battle with the *mad'u* all over the world in the name of bringing Islam to the political domination of the world. Thanks to this fertile, political interpretation of Islam, people all over the world are being driven away from Islam.

To make this prediction (i.e. that true religion will enter every home in the final period) a reality, what Muslims must do is invite the *mad'u* to God. Muslims must engage themselves whole-heartedly in the task of communicating to all nations of the world the message of monotheism and the life hereafter. They must work towards making the ideological power of Islam a known and established fact, so that those who want to accept its message are enabled to do so, while those who do not cannot say that they were not told the truth.

The culmination of the process of *daw'ah* is to have fully communicated Islam to the people, rather the establishment of the political power of Islam.

23 May-June 1991

**Three things which must remain inviolate**

“A Muslim’s honour, property and blood: no Muslim should violate these things.”

(Hadith)

## The Stone Moved

A telling episode in the history of the Israelites was once narrated by the Prophet of Islam to his companions, one of whom was Abdullah ibn Umar. The latter recorded it as follows:

“Three of those who have passed before you set forth on a journey. When night approached, they entered a cave in which to pass the night. Landslides often take place in the mountains, and at night, a large rock hurtled from above and came to rest right at the opening to the cave, completely blocking it. The three travellers then said that since there was no way they could move the rock, they should pray to God, calling upon Him to help them by virtue of the good deeds they had performed in their lives.

“The first of the three began to pray. He said “O God, when my parents had grown very old, I would come home every day after grazing the cattle, and would first give them milk to drink. It was only after they had their milk, that my children and I would have some. One day I wandered off so far in search of fodder that, when I returned home, my parents had already gone to bed. When I brought them their milk, they were already fast asleep. Now I hesitated either to waken them, or to drink milk and give it to the rest of the family before giving it to my parents. So I stood before their bed, holding the cup of milk in my hand, so that I could offer it to them as they awakened. In this way, the whole night passed and then daylight appeared. All this time, the children had kept sobbing and whimpering at my feet. Only when my parents had got up in the morning and drunk their milk did we slake our thirst. My God, if this act of mine was only to please you, then may this rock be moved, and may we be saved from this calamity which has befallen us.’ Then the rock moved a little but the opening was not wide enough to let them out.

“Now the second man started praying. He said, ‘O God. I had a cousin, my uncle’s daughter. I loved her very much. But whenever, I wanted to be intimate with her, she forbade it. Then, after some time, when she was starving because of a famine, she came to me for help. I gave her 120 dinars on the condition that she would surrender herself to me. She was ready for this, but the moment I had her completely in my power and had come very close to her, she said, “Fear God, and do not break the bonds of *mahr* (marriage bonds) without fulfilling its conditions.” At this I let her go, even although I loved her more than anyone in the world. And I did not even take back the money I had given her. O, my God, If this action of mine was for your sake, then please, God, rescue us from this predicament.’ Then again the rock moved a little, but it was still not enough for them to walk out.

“Then the third man began to pray. He said, ‘My God, I used to employ a few men on daily wages. I would pay them all when the day’s work was done, but, one day, one of the labourers went away without collecting his wages. I took this amount and invested it in my business where it yielded a large profit. After some time, the labourer reappeared and demanded his wages. I said, ‘These camels, cows, goats

and slaves that stand before you are your wages.’ ‘You must be joking,’ he replied. ‘No,’ I said, ‘I am not joking. It is all yours.’ He thereupon took away all the men and animals without leaving a single one for me. O God, if this act of mine was for your sake alone, then please avert this calamity we are facing.’ Then the rock moved far enough for them all to walk out.” (Bukhari, Muslim)

This being one of the best authenticated of the Prophet’s traditions, there is no cause to doubt its veracity. It proves not only that prayer is something which can even move mountains, but also that prayer is not just a matter of mere words which fall from the lips without bearing any relation to one’s real life.

This incident shows that a prayer that can move rocks can be made only by those who have surrendered themselves totally to God, who have made God their judge, who stand firmly on God’s chosen path, whom neither thirst, hunger nor family ties can divert from this path, who, even on the most emotional, sensitive issues, are open to God’s words, who defer immediately to His wishes, even at highly charged moments, who so fear the Day of Reckoning that they do not hesitate even to hand over all their acquired wealth to its real owner, who readily acknowledge a just demand, even if the supplicant is powerless in comparison to themselves.

God’s true servants are those who opt for God by making a psychological surrender and by sacrificing worldly interests. Men may pray to God to move rocks, but it is only those who have found God on this plane, who will have their prayers answered.